

## Message Text

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10  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07

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R 271549Z OCT 76  
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4704

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 7555

E.O.11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT TS  
SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA OPENS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY,  
REASSURES NATION ON BOURGUIBA'S HEALTH

REF: TUNIS 7381

1. SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER HEDI NOUIRA OPENED ANNUAL NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SESSION OCTOBER 26 STANDING IN FOR AILING PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA AND DELIVERED GENERALLY UNEXCEPTIONAL SPEECH. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HAD EARLIER ANNOUNCED THAT THE SPEECH WOULD BE "IMPORTANT." HE ALSO TOLD DEPUTIES AND NATION VIA TELEVISION THAT THE PRESIDENT'S HEALTH IS "CLEARLY IMPROVING," UNDOUBTEDLY INTENDING TO QUIET RUMORS OF SERIOUS DETERIORATION THAT SPRANG UP LAST WEEK AFTER IT WAS ANNOUNCED PRIME MINISTER WOULD OPEN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN BOURGUIBA'S PLACE (SEE REFTEL). END SUMMARY.

2. TAKING THE PLACE OF AILING PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA WHO IS UNDERGOING MEDICAL TREATMENT/REST CURE IN GENEVA, PRIME MINISTER HEDI NOUIRA OPENED THE ANNUAL SESSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 26. NOUIRA EXPLAINED HIS SUBSTITUTION FOR THE PRESIDENT IN PRELIMINARY REMARKS TO THE DEPTUIES AND TOLD THEM THAT HE WAS HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE COMBATTANT SUPREME'S HEALTH WAS "CLEARLY IMPROVING."  
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HE THEN READ A SPEECH, GIVING THE IMPRESSION THAT THE

PRESIDENT HAD PERSONNALLY WRITTEN THE MESSAGE AND SENT IT FROM GENEVA.

3. THE ANNUAL PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WAS A GENERALLY UNEXCEPTIONAL REVIEW OF THE DESTOURIAN SOCIALIST PARTY'S PRINCIPLES AND IDEOLOGY. THE SPEECH PLACED GREAT EMPHASIS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF NATIONAL UNITY AND COOPERATION OF ALL SOCIAL CLASSES IN ORDER TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESS. IT REVIEWED THE DESTRUCTIVE EFFECTS OF TRIBALISM AND REGIONALISM THROUGHOUT TUNISIAN HISTORY AND WARNED THAT PROGRESS ACHIEVED SINCE INDEPENDENCE COULD BE JEOPARDIZED BY INTERNAL DIVISIONS. THE SPEECH ASSURED THE NATION THAT CURRENT GOVERNMENT POLICY IS DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE THE MOST RAPID GROWTH POSSIBLE WHILE INSURING A JUST SHARE OF THE FRUITS OF GROW (#) ALL SOCIAL CLASSES.

4. NOUIRA ALSO BRIEFLY REVIEWED INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, NOTING THAT TUNISIAN FOREIGN POLICY IS BASED ON THREE PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL MORALITY; I.E., MUTUAL RESPECT, GENUINE COOPERATION AND SOLIDARITY WITH JUST CAUSES. HE SAID THAT TUNISIAN SHOULD NOT LOSE HOPE IN THE IDEA OF A GREATER NAGHREB, A TACIT RECOGNITION THAT THE REALIZATION OF THIS STANDING GOAL OBJECTIVE IS YET FAR OFF IN THE FUTURE. SPEAKING IN BOURGUIBA'S NAME, THE PRIME MINISTER PROPOSED THAT A SYSTEM OF ECONOMIC EXCHANGES WOULD SERVE AS A BASIS FOR EVENTUAL UNITY, ALTHOUGH NO SPECIFIC PROPOSALS WERE MADE. THE SPEECH ALSO REITERATED TUNISIAN POLICY ON THE MIDDLE EAST, AND POL LEADER YASSIR ARAFAT WAS SPECIFICALLY URGED TO GO TO THE UNGA TO ANNOUNCE HIS ACCEPTANCE OF THE 1947 PARTITION PLAN AS A BASIS FOR PEACE.

5. NOUIRA'S ASSURANCES THAT THE PRESIDENT'S HEALTH IS IMPROVING WERE THE SECOND WITHIN FOUR DAYS. (ON OCTOBER 22 HE MADE SIMILAR STATEMENT TO A GROUP OF PARTY LEADERS IN A PUBLIC CEREMONY AT PSD HEADQUARTERS.) THIS CONTINUED EMPHASIS ON BOURGUIBA'S IMPROVING HEALTH IS UNDOUBTEDLY INTENDED TO QUIET RUMORS THAT USUALLY SPRING UP WHEN BOURGUIBA IS ABROAD FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT AND REST. WE HEARD PRIVATELY FROM HABIB BOURGUIBA, JR., ON OCTOBER 21  
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THAT "HAPPILY- A REPORT HAD JUST BEEN RECEIVED FROM GENEVA

THAT THE PRESIDENT IS "MUCH BETTER."  
KING

NOTE BY OC/T: TUNIS 7555 (#) OMISSION CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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## Message Attributes

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